Accountability Report

2015–2016

Natural Resources

NOVA SCOTIA

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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources for the year ended March 31, 2016 is prepared pursuant to the Finance Act and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Department of Natural Resources Statement of Mandate for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the Department of Natural Resources outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by Department of Natural Resources management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the Department of Natural Resources 2015-16 Statement of Mandate.

Honourable Lloyd P. Hines
Minister of Natural Resources

Frank Dunn
Deputy Minister of Natural Resources

Message from the Minister and Deputy Minister

We are pleased to present the Department of Natural Resources' Accountability Report for 2015-2016.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is dedicated to work that balances the environmental, economic and social values of our natural resources. It is charged with managing, developing, conserving, and protecting the province's biodiversity, forests, minerals, Crown lands, and provincial parks system. All of these going concerns made for a busy and productive year at DNR.

For example, we took new steps forward in managing and supporting our forests and biodiversity, including strides toward better ecosystem planning for forestry and biodiversity decision making on Crown land.

We continued to make progress on the goals and actions laid out in *The Path We Share: A Natural Resources Strategy for Nova Scotia 2011-2020*.

To advance mining and mineral exploration in Nova Scotia, we brought forward a new, modernized Mineral Resources Act to help encourage more economic growth in this sector through greater efficiencies and reduced red tape to assist industry.

The department also moved forward in its commitment to provide more transparency about the ways we are working to manage our province's natural resources. We have aimed to give Nova Scotians more information about what the department is doing on their behalf. Information about fibre harvests on western region Crown land is regularly posted online with maps that include proposed harvest treatment methods and the opportunity to comment.

The provincial landscape viewer was announced in 2015-16, allowing greater access to ecological landscape, forest inventory, wildlife, wetlands, and Crown lands data via an interactive map. An advanced and improved version of NovaROC – the province's online mineral and petroleum rights registry system—was also launched. It brings greater reliability and convenience and streamlines service delivery.

The province's Open Data Portal also began offering greater access to natural resources maps and datasets.

We encourage you to read details on these successes and other DNR initiatives outlined in this report.

For further details on the Department of Natural Resource's many programs and services, please visit our website often at www.novascotia.ca/natr/.

Honourable Lloyd P. Hines
Minister of Natural Resources

Frank Dunn
Deputy Minister of Natural Resources

Financial Results

	2015-2016 Estimate	2015-2016 Actual Expense	2015-2016 Variance
Program & Service Area	($ thousands)	($ thousands)	($ thousands)
Gross Departmental Expenses:			
Senior Management	758	751	(7)
Corporate Services Unit	1,157	1,214	57
Renewable Resources	18,689	19,935	1,246
Mineral Resources	4,312	4,332	20
Regional Services	48,613	47,252	(1,361)
Policy, Planning and Support Services	4,844	5,045	201
Land Services	4,610	4,450	(160)
Total: Gross Departmental Expenses	**82,983**	**82,979**	**(4)**
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenue	12,835	13,356	521
Fees and Other Charges	1,855	1,899	44
Ordinary Recoveries	463	1,145	682
Total: Revenue, Fees & Recoveries	**15,153**	**16,400**	**1,247**
TCA Purchase Requirements	**3,300**	**6,839**	**3,539**
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	**706.0**	**703.4**	**(2.6)**

Variance Explanation:

1. Ordinary Revenue was $521 thousand above estimate, resulting mostly from higher than anticipated timber licence/stumpage revenue, leases, and mineral rentals.
2. Ordinary Recoveries were $682 thousand above estimate, resulting primarily from out-of-province fire suppression costs recovered from other jurisdictions, wildlife park retail sales, and firewood and ice sold at provincial parks.
3. TCA Purchase Requirements were $3.5 million higher than estimated, resulting from $4 million for an additional authorized land purchase, offset by minor savings in other areas.

Measuring Our Performance

The Department of Natural Resources has broad responsibilities relative to the development, management, conservation and protection of forest, mineral, parks and wildlife resources and the administration of the province's Crown lands.

In 2015-16, DNR continued ongoing work to transform the way natural resources are managed in Nova Scotia to ensure a sustainable, balanced approach that incorporates economic, environmental and social benefit for Nova Scotians now and in the future.

Guided by *The Path We Share: A Natural Resources Strategy for Nova Scotia 2011-2020*, DNR's 2015-16 Statement of Mandate focused on activities that support the department's primary strategic outcome of sustainable resource development, and supporting outcomes of collaborative leadership, research and knowledge sharing and good governance.

Through achievement of short-term goals and progress towards longer-term priorities related to each of these outcomes, this report demonstrates DNR's progress in balancing the sometimes conflicting demands on our natural resources. Some of the performance measures included in the department's 2015-16 Statement of Mandate were replaced in the 2016-17 Business Plan to align with government's focus going forward.

A detailed accounting for all actions included in the Natural Resources strategy will be provided in the Five-Year Progress Report to be released in August 2016.

Sustainable Resource Development

The Department of Natural Resources strives to ensure Nova Scotia's natural resources are managed in a way that balances economic, environmental and social demands for current and future generations of Nova Scotians.

In 2015-16, DNR maintained focus on supporting healthy forests, continuing to revise the way forest resources on Crown lands are allocated and managed, exploring complementary ways to use the province's Crown land, and helping develop systems that protect biodiversity and apply an ecosystem approach.

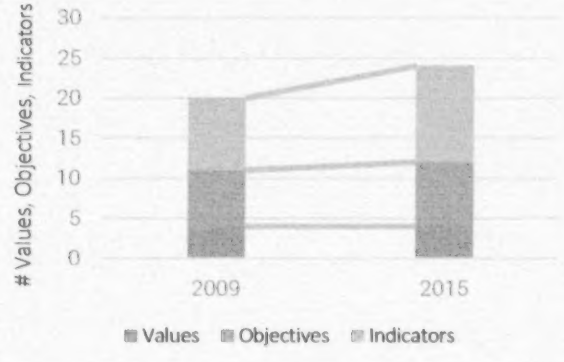
Outcome: Better ecosystem planning for forestry and biodiversity related decision making on Crown land	
Measure	Demonstrated use of environmental, economic and social values in the calculation of wood supply coming from Crown land
Target	Base year data to be compiled for 2015-16

Our results:

To facilitate a balanced approach to resource analysis on Crown lands, DNR conducts a strategic resource analysis to develop forest management plans that includes wood supply as well as other values (such as protection of Old Forests, Aboriginal interests, wildlife landscaping, and habitat buffers) not traditionally in forestry models.

DNR's analysis looks at forest ecosystem, forest products, and wildlife habitat values as desirable qualities in sustainable forests. Each value is analysed based on unique objectives and indicators to describe and compare impacts of alternative forest management strategies and policies on the future state of the forest. Planning with better knowledge of accumulated values and impacts enables enhanced ecosystem planning for forestry and biodiversity related decision-making on Crown land.

Chart 1:
Values, Objectives, and Indicators used in Strategic Resource Analysis



Objectives and indicators added to the analysis in 2015-16, as indicated in Chart 1, account for, evaluate, and forecast,

- moose habitat requirements over time when special management practices in areas with a high concentration of moose are employed
- landscape composition when partial harvest strategies are employed
- fibre sustainability at various levels of silviculture investment

To further support sustainable resource development in 2015-16, DNR,

- advanced the Landscape Planning Pilot Project in eastern Nova Scotia, in collaboration with Port Hawkesbury Paper, by developing a Landscape Management Framework for Crown lands; and by defining the scope, values, indicators and targets that will form the foundation of a plan that will enable decision-making for site scale forest planning that conserves biodiversity and maintains a sustainable forest industry
- implemented guidelines for Biodiversity Rich Landscapes under the Western Crown Lands Conceptual Plan to support resource use that protects biodiversity and habitats
- established the Forest Biodiversity Science Advisory Committee – composed of government and non-government academic experts in the fields of forest science, biodiversity, ecological planning, spatial modelling or other related science knowledge – to provide independent advice on science, research, and departmental forest, biodiversity and landscape management initiatives
- continued development and consultation of a new policy for forest resource management on Crown land that uses an eco-system based, landscape level approach to forest management and the provincial timber objective
- developed a new province-wide forest operations monitoring system to ensure forest operations are conforming to provincial requirements for special management practices that support forest biodiversity and healthy forests
- completed three risk assessments on silviculture monitoring, monitoring of timber harvest reporting, and harvesting/silviculture inspections to proactively minimize risk to the province's natural resources
- continued work on a guidebook for forest landowners to equip them with the knowledge and tools to conserve biodiversity on their lands
- entered into a three-year licence agreement with Medway Community Forest Co-op for the management of the first working community forest to be piloted in Nova Scotia
- promoted economic opportunities for higher value wood fibre uses through partnerships with FPInnovations, Canadian Forest Service, Innovacorp, and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency through initiatives such as the Innovation Hub -- a joint initiative with DNR, Innovacorp and the private sector to complete projects to improve long-term forest product sector performance and attract biorefinery investment to Nova Scotia
- provided financial support for site improvements at the Innovacorp Demonstration Centre needed to evaluate biofuel and determine its worth in the commercial market
- assessed and implemented new opportunities for wild blueberry cultivation on Crown lands as part of an ongoing commitment to explore complementary ways to use Crown lands for economic development outside the forestry sector, in partnership with the Department of Agriculture and the private sector, and in consultation with the Mi'kmaq

Collaborative Leadership

To support sustainable resource development and shared stewardship of the province's natural resources, the Department of Natural Resources promotes a collaborative culture of engagement, innovation and mutual accountability among government, industry and interested groups.

In 2015-16, DNR focused on collaboration with stakeholders to support individuals, businesses and interested groups in becoming better stewards and strengthening their understanding of decisions and impacts of natural resource development.

Outcome: Industry and interested groups become better stewards and strengthen their understanding of decisions about mineral resource development and how it affects communities.	
Measure	i) Number of unique downloads of "Community Consultation: A Guide for Prospectors and Mineral Exploration Companies working in Nova Scotia" from the Geoscience and Mines branch website ii) Minister receives fewer letters from the public, industry and stakeholder groups expressing concerns about exploration and mining
Target	Base year data to be compiled for 2015-16

Our results:

In collaboration with government, industry and other interested groups, DNR has developed and continues to share best practices on industry engagement with communities affected by mineral exploration and mining. Effective engagement related to mineral exploration and mining projects helps prospectors and mining companies to identify concerns and work with communities and individuals to develop solutions before they become issues.

Base year data for 2015-16 was compiled for each of the related measures, as noted.

i) The community consultation guide, developed and promoted in collaboration with industry and interested groups is widely available to prospectors and mineral exploration companies in both hard copy and electronic format. From January to March 2016 alone, there were 40 unique downloads of the guide from the DNR Geoscience and Mines branch website. As mineral resources legislation is renewed to include requirements for industry to effectively engage with stakeholders, the guide will become an even greater tool to support effective engagement with communities impacted by mineral development projects.

   In 2015-16, DNR collaborated with Geoscientists Nova Scotia to lead a workshop on best practices in community engagement. Fifty participants, including professional geoscientists, professional geoscientists in training, and prospectors attended the

workshop that included practical exercises for participants, as well as opportunities to share personal experiences and learn from one another.

ii) In 2015-16, the Minister of Natural Resources received six letters from the public, industry and stakeholder groups expressing concerns about exploration and mining.

In the 2016-17 Business Plan, the department changed its accountability focus related to this outcome to look more broadly at the effectiveness of new mining rules and practices, which include the requirement for industry to implement a stakeholder engagement plan. These rules were developed in consultation with industry, interested groups, environmental non-governmental organizations and the Mi'kmaq.

To further demonstrate DNR's commitment to collaborative leadership in 2015-16, the department,

- partnered with Ducks Unlimited Canada and Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency to develop an enhanced business plan and infrastructure improvements for education and interpretation at the Shubenacadie Provincial Wildlife Park
- collaborated with the Department of Environment, to complete the survey, research and land administration required by the end of 2015 to ensure 12.26 per cent of Nova Scotia's landmass is protected by designating more than 100 properties in Nova Scotia as wilderness areas, nature reserves and parks over the course of the year
- collaborated with Nova Scotia Woodlot Owners and Operators and other organizations in support of three Woodland Conferences across the province to share information on a range of topics such as integrated resources management, succession planning, silviculture funding and certification programs
- collaborated with the Mi'kmaq to develop a Mi'kmaw Forestry Initiative in Western Nova Scotia, which is intended to serve as a pilot project for an alternative form of community forestry that incorporates Mi'kmaq values and concepts into forest planning and management and provides training opportunities for Mi'kmaw forest workers
- co-chaired the Black Ash Recovery Team with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia to support shared stewardship of this threatened species that is of particular cultural importance to the Mi'kmaq

Research and Knowledge Sharing

The Department of Natural Resources is committed to sharing research capacity and knowledge with interested groups to support informed decisions about biodiversity, forest management, the balanced use of Crown land, and the geoscience-based activities that address challenges like coastal erosion and geohazards.

In 2015-16, DNR collaborated with other resource departments on ongoing development of a shared policy and guidelines for effective public participation and stakeholder engagement to

enhance research and knowledge sharing among government, industry, and other interested groups. The department also increased online accessibility to information related to the province's natural resources.

Outcome: Government and interested groups share knowledge to help make informed decisions about issues affecting our natural resources	
Measure	Improved accessibility to information regarding various natural resources
Target	Qualitative evidence of more interactive programming and information sharing via the DNR website, education outreach programs, and community/engagement events

Our results:

Throughout the year, the department developed and released a variety of online tools to increase accessibility to natural resource related information and enhance opportunities for better decision making around issues affecting the province's natural resources.

To enhance research and knowledge sharing on issues affecting natural resources, in 2015-16, DNR,

- ensured 100% of Western Crown land was mapped and presented to the public for review and input through the Harvest Map Viewer (launched April 2016), an interactive web-based application that maps all planned harvesting on Crown lands in the province
- released upgrades to the department's online radon map that made it possible for individuals to determine the level of threat of exposure to radon at a particular physical address -- from October 2015 to March 2016 alone, the map was accessed nearly 6000 times, including nearly 4000 visits from new users
- released a new build of the Nova Scotia Registry of Claims (NovaROC) to enhance reliability and convenience, including the capacity to accept debit-card payments to streamline service delivery
- launched the Provincial Landscape Viewer[1] to enhance accessibility of data related to land and resource management, such as forest inventory, ecological landscape classification, wildlife, wetlands, Crown lands, and protected areas
- increased accessibility to natural resource related maps and datasets through the province's Open Data Portal

[1] The Provincial Landscape Viewer was developed as part of DNR's multi-year Provincial Land and Resource Management Initiative. This cross-government project links land related data so it can be more readily used for decision making by communities, developers, industries and others.

Good Governance

The Department of Natural Resources maintains an ongoing commitment to ensure laws and policies are clear and effective tools that oversee the economic, environmental and social supports for shared stewardship of our natural resources. Using a continuous improvement approach, the department also focuses on developing and implementing improved departmental tools and processes to ensure efficient and effective service delivery.

Outcome #1: Governments, industries and individuals receive the information they need to help with land-use planning and decision making	
Measure	Average number of days to complete renewal/reissue of Crown land lease (from date of application to decision)
Target	For 10 year lease renewals: 2 months from date of application to decision by 2017 For 20 year reissue of lease: 4 months from date of application to decision by 2017

Our results:

Over the past three years, DNR has designed, developed and implemented CrownLINC, a technology solution to track and manage all applications for use and development of Crown lands. The system supports the workflow and business transactions managed by the Land Services Branch of DNR. It includes automated processes for preparing integrated resource management reports in regional offices, automates document preparation and provides integration of data across the department to improve decision-making associated with Crown lands administration.

System and process improvements made in 2015, such as adding the ability for clients to submit applications for use or sale of Crown lands and pay online, has led to faster turnaround times for DNR to complete the renewal or reissue of Crown land leases, as demonstrated in Chart 3.

Chart 2: Average Processing Time for renewal/re-issue of Crown Land leases

Year	10-Year Renewal	20-Year Reissue
Base Year[2]	1.1 years	5.3 years
2014	6 months	12 months
2015	4 months	11 months
2016	TBD	TBD
Target: 2017	2 months	4 months

[2] Base year is based on a cumulative average of processing time for all existing applications migrated into the CrownLINC system in 2013.

To streamline service delivery, in 2015-16, DNR also,

- trained 15 DNR staff (four green belt/11 yellow belt) through the government-wide Lean/Six Sigma program to build capacity to implement a process improvement approach that reduces complexity, duplication and wasted steps
- changed regulations to enable Human Wildlife Conflict hunting stamps to make it easier for farmers and hunters to protect their crops from nuisance bear and deer
- adopted a self-registration model at seven of twenty provincial park campgrounds to streamline service delivery
- removed a backlog of licence applications in NovaROC to enhance client experience and ensure data is accurate and up-to-date

Outcome #2: Laws and policies are clear and effective	
Measure	Percentage of laws that have been reviewed and, where appropriate, repealed, revised or updated
Target	50 per cent of DNR's statutes are reviewed by 2020

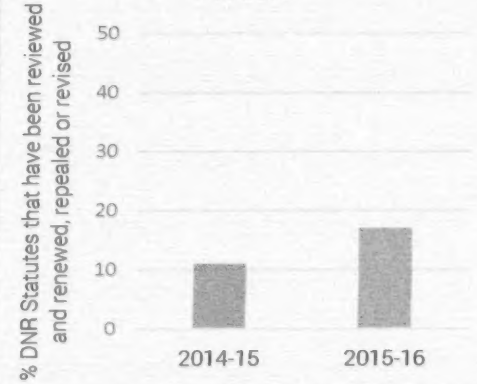
Our results:

In 2015-16, DNR continued ongoing work to review and improve laws and policies related to Nova Scotia's natural resources to progress towards reviewing 50 per cent of the department's statutes by 2020.

To ensure laws and policies are clear and effective, in 2015-16, DNR,

- reviewed and renewed the *Mineral Resources Act* to provide a clear and timely legislative framework for industry and government, in consultation with industry, interested groups, environmental non-government organizations and the M'ikmaq (The updated act received Royal Assent in the Spring 2016 session of the House of Assembly)
- reviewed and repealed the *Blueberry Associations Act*, legislation that is no longer relevant and does not serve a necessary function (This act was repealed by Royal Assent in the Spring 2016 Session of the House of Assembly)
- continued development and consultation on a new policy for forest resource management on Crown land to replace the existing 1989 Forest Policy

Chart 3:
DNR Legislation Review and Renewal



Annual Report under Section 18 of the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act

The Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011.

The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith.

The Act also protects employees who do disclose from reprisals, by enabling them to lay a complaint of reprisal with the Labor Board.

A Wrongdoing for the purposes of the Act is:

a) a contravention of provincial or federal laws or regulations
b) a misuse or gross mismanagement of public funds or assets
c) an act or omission that creates an imminent risk of a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or the environment, or
d) directing or counselling someone to commit a wrongdoing

The following is a summary of disclosures received by the Department of Natural Resources.

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act Fiscal Year 2015-2016	
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	N/A